

Gateway

Hurricane Sandy Edition

National Park Service

U. S. Department of the Interior

Gateway National Recreation Area



Winter 2012-2013



This aerial photo shows the breach in the West Pond Trail caused by storm action of Sandy. It spans more than 100 feet.

Gateway Damaged by Hurricane Sandy

This may be the first time we are presenting this publication without any program offerings. Hurricane Sandy has damaged, even devastated, areas of the park which has been closed since the storm hit. Many of you may have been affected in large or small ways by Sandy. We will not describe the storm again, since many of you are in or near the damaged areas and the press and media coverage has been thorough. We do want to let you know what is happening and what the state of the park is.

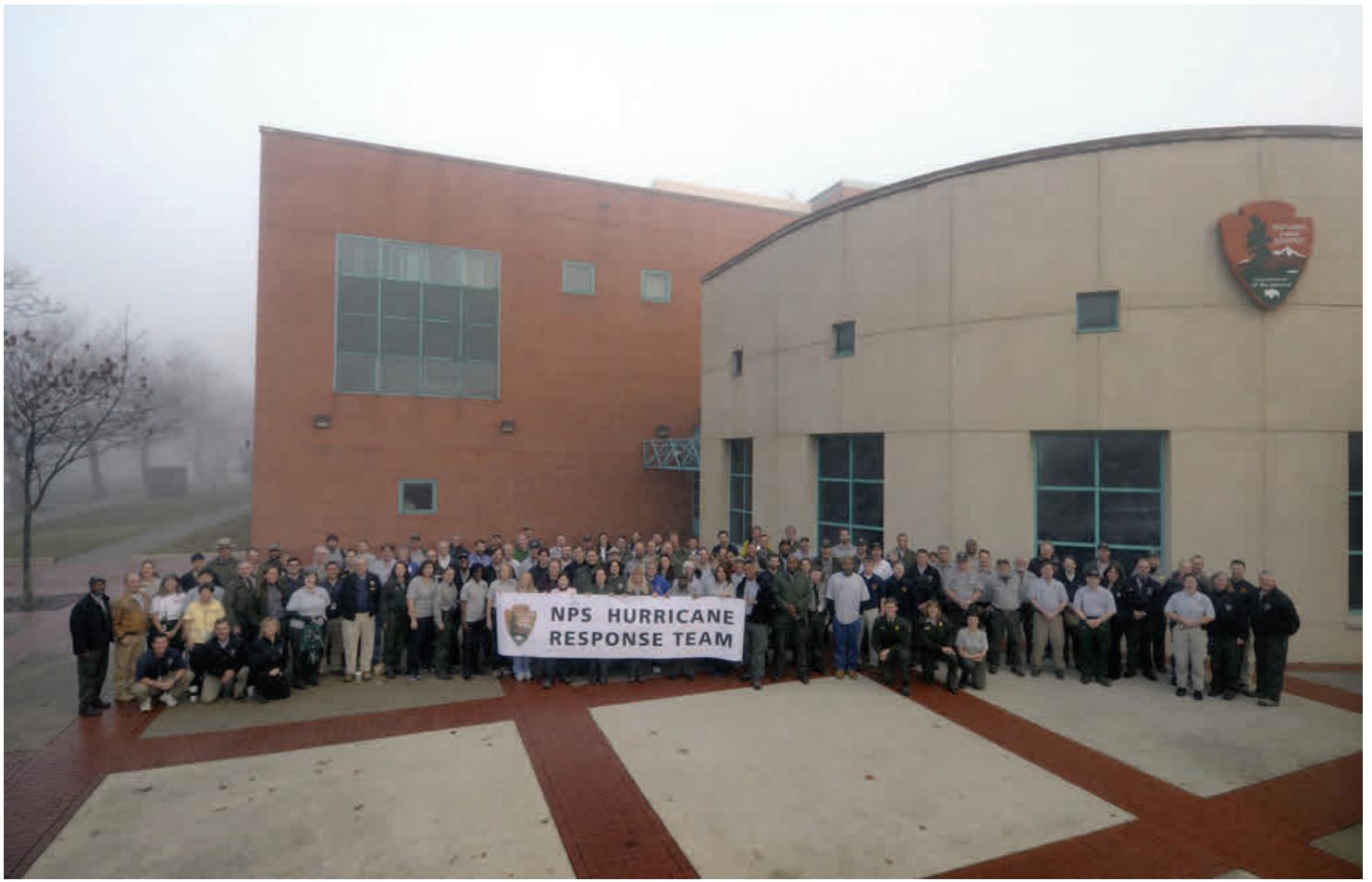
Many people are now referring to hurricane Sandy as a super-storm, the truly “perfect” storm. The confluence of elements—a tropical depression developing into a hurricane coupled with a different storm from the west—all driven by the jet stream created a super-storm event that has never been known in recorded weather history. The storm drove head on into the Jersey shore and New York harbor delivering blows that are leaving permanent scars.

Gateway Closed to Visitors

The damage to all units of the park was sufficient to necessitate its closure for the safety of its wellbeing and of its employees and visitors. Some areas, including Floyd Bennett Field, Miller Field, and Riis Park are being used by several agencies for emergency work. While this is underway, the park values your safety and the safety of our employees above all so for that reason, no visitors are permitted in those areas of the park.

While the storm did take lives in the local area, we are pleased to report that no NPS staff were lost. Many families who lived in park housing and in nearby areas have been displaced while their housing units are being inspected and have repairs made. Everyone was evacuated from park housing on Sunday, well in advance of the storm’s full strike on Monday.

Recovery will take time. We are pleased that we have been able to open the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Frank Charles Park, Hamilton Beach, and Great Kills Park. Other areas of the park may reopen shortly, others will take longer, perhaps not for months. We ask your patience while we survey and inspect a 26,000 acre park with some 600 structures.



Incident Management Teams Assembled

Gateway's recovery efforts began by inspecting historic, recreational and natural resources, thoroughly so that we can make wise decisions about their future uses. To accomplish this inspection and analysis project, a special team has been assembled of many disciplines including those involving facilities and structures, natural and cultural historians, assembled from park units across the land. They are visiting each of the sites and areas for documentation and the creation of reports, and to effect clean up and begin emergency repairs.

The National Park Service Incident Management Team has just completed its 23rd day of operation from its Command Center Operation at Fort Wadsworth in the New York Harbor area. Specialized crews are supporting employee emergency needs, conducting damage assessments and removing debris in affected areas.

Currently working with the team are 451 National Park Service employees from 99 National Park Service units and 38 states and Puerto Rico, a reduction from a high of 546. External resources are gradually being replaced by local NPS staff.

The National Park Service Incident Command Team was originally assigned to all of the National Parks in the New York Harbor area. Additional parks affected are on Long Island and in New Jersey, including Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, Fire Island National Seashore, Morristown National Historic Park, and Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

Initial work has been completed at many sites and the following park service units are now open: African Burial Ground National Monument, Federal Hall National Memorial, General Grant National Memorial, Hamilton Grange National Historic Site, St. Paul's Church National Historic Site, Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site, Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, Morristown National Historic Park (including New Jersey Brigade, Cross Estate, Fort Nonsense, Washington Headquarters Museum and Ford Mansion), Thomas Edison National Historical Park, Hamilton Beach and Frank Charles Park, Great Kills Park and Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.

Conditions Changing Daily: Check for Updates

The conditions at all areas of the park are changing and improving each day, so by the time this is posted some of this information will be out of date.

In order for you to see what is happening and see more pictures, we refer you to the following websites, which you may check for updates:

NPS Hurricane Sandy Response:

<https://www.facebook.com/HurricaneResponseNPS>

NPS Hurricane Sandy Response Flickr:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sandyresponsenps/>

NPS Gateway Plan Your Visit webpage:

<http://www.nps.gov/gate/planyourvisit/index.htm>



These pictures from Sandy Hook show how wide-ranging is the damage. The porches on Officers' Row have been stabilized by the ICM while the pictures of the prints drying show interior damage.

Sandy Hook--While the iconic lighthouse is in good shape, many buildings sustained water damage and will have to be pumped out and repaired. The fresh water and sewer systems were incapacitated, and there is currently no electricity. We do not know how long it will take to rehabilitate the necessary systems and buildings to reopen the park.

The NPS is working with the electric company to restore power, which will require repairing and/or replacing poles, wires, transformers and junction boxes. Pumping of the sewer plant continues and electrical components are being inspected. Cleaning and rehabilitating the fresh water plant has begun with sanitizing, refilling and backwashing the various water plant systems.

Join our Mailing List? This publication is issued four times per year, and usually has listings of our programs and events. If you are not on our list, and wish to be, send a message to Charles_Markis@nps.gov; put "program guide" in subject line.

Do you want to volunteer to help? We will be having work sessions and activities which we will announce from time to time. If you would like to be part of the volunteer team, please contact Keith_White@nps.gov to sign up.



Top left: Floyd Bennett Field is used as a staging area by FEMA and relief agencies. Right, Riis Parking Lot used as temporary debris storage for the Rockaways. Bottom: West Pond trail showing breach of more than 100 feet caused by storm surge.

Jamaica Bay--Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, with its location near the Rockaways, is a major staging area for several federal agencies and relief agencies. At Jacob Riis Park in Queens, water pushed through the ground floor of the bathhouse, the police building and first aid station. The parking lot at Riis is being used as a temporary debris storage site, especially for the removal of debris from Breezy Point and other Rockaway areas affected by the storm.

The West and East Ponds at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge have been breached by the ocean and are now saline rather than freshwater. Aviator Sports Complex, the Gateway Marina and Global Golf are open. As of Friday, Nov. 23, the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge was reopened and assumed its usual seasonal schedule.



President Obama steps off Marine One on Miller Field to meet with recovery workers and Sandy victims on Nov. 15, 2012

Staten Island Unit--Great Kills Park seems to have relatively little damage to its natural areas, but the marina is gone, and the park boat launch also suffered damage. Miller Field received flooding but was not hit nearly as hard as neighborhoods immediately adjacent. Hangar 38 has been condemned and we lost all the park equipment stored in the hangar. Miller Field is being used as a staging area for FEMA and other relief services to provide assistance to our neighboring communities. Fort Wadsworth lost some trees and coastline. Great Kills Park reopened as of Friday, Nov. 23, and is serving as the Staten Island terminus for the temporary ferry service to Manhattan.



Left, aerial view of marina at Great Kills. Above, worker clearing wood at Great Kills.